

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

This Document contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States, within the meaning of Title 18, Sections 793 and 794, of the U.S. Code, as amended. Its transmission or revelation of its contents to or receipt by an unauthorized person is prohibited by law. The reproduction of this form is prohibited.

SECRET
SECURITY INFORMATION

50X1-HUM

COUNTRY USSR (Latvian SSR)

REPORT

SUBJECT Conditions in Riga and Katlakalna

DATE DISTR. 17 August 1953

DATE OF INFO.

NO. OF PAGES 7

PLACE ACQUIRED

REQUIREMENT NO. RD

50X1-HUM

REFERENCES

THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.
THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.
(FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

50X1-HUM

1. Living Conditions
in the restaurants and stolovaya, or workers' dining-room, in Riga there was a menu and one could order what he wanted. There were waiters, mostly girls, and in the stolovaya in Skirotava suburb the girls were called by name. Tipping was not customary and was never added to the bill. Sometimes people gave tips, though. Alcoholic beverages were available any place where food was sold. Alcoholic beverages were available even in grocery stores, but there one could buy only by the bottle. In Katlakalna suburb of Riga much fish was consumed, since the Daugava River was heavily fished. Near Dole Island salmon were caught, and also the famous Dole river lamprey. The fishermen usually sold the fish in the black market to avoid taxes. People usually bought a whole big salmon in the fall, salted it, and consumed it all winter through. At the Central Market in Riga fish was sold black, i.e., not from an official stand, where one had to pay three rubles rent. Sugar black-marketeers operated furtively on the Central Market. Cigarettes were sold in shops and kiosks, but not in newspaper kiosks, which had only newspapers, books, and paper, also envelopes. There were no cigarette machines. Clothing could be obtained on the bazaar as well as in the shops, before the bazaar was closed in 1950. The bazaar was on Zvirgzdu sala, an island in the Daugava. It was closed because the authorities wanted personal belongings brought for sale to the specially-established State-run shops, so the State would get the profit. After the bazaar on Zvirgzdu Island was closed in the summer of 1950, the navy built something on this island.

50X1-HUM

2.

SECRET

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|---|------|---|------|---|-----|---|-----|--|-----|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| STATE | X | ARMY | X | NAVY | X | AIR | X | FBI | | AEC | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|---|------|---|------|---|-----|---|-----|--|-----|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

(Note: Washington Distribution Indicated By "X"; Field Distribution By "#".)

50X1-HUM

SECRET

-2-

4. Elementary school was free, and compulsory for at least four grades. Books, pencils, etc, had to be bought by parents. Of the five teachers, two were men and three women. The language was Latvian, but each day there was one and, some days, even two lessons in Russian, so anybody knew enough Russian. The usual praise of Stalin was heard at any lesson, but it was not taken seriously by the pupils. [redacted] 50X1-HUM
- in Riga pupils were more vulnerable to the Communist teaching, but in the country the ties to the family were stronger; since the adults at home cursed the system, so did the children, of course not openly or among strangers. [redacted]
- [redacted] Some children in Riga complained about the difficulties in their school and the difficult Russian language in particular. 50X1-HUM
5. Though the kolkhoz had its own tractor, it was supposed to be used only for transportation, not for ploughing, since the ploughing was done by the tractors of the MTS. Nevertheless, the kolkhoz people did the ploughing, too, thus saving part of the grain which would otherwise be delivered to the MTS. Starting early in 1951, the regulations were enforced and the kolkhoz tractor was not

SECRET

SECRET

50X1-HUM

-3-

allowed to do any more ploughing. Even the threshing machine had to be delivered to the MTS. In the kolkhoz there were about 80 cows. A big barn was started, to have a capacity of 100 cows. It was not finished yet in May 1951, and the cows were kept in several places, 12 in one place, 25 in another, etc. There was electricity in Katlakalns, also in the kolkhoz. In the house

there was 120-volt electric current. electric bulbs were used for a long time without being replaced, and in their barn they had a bulb which had been there for at least three years and was still good.

50X1-HUM

6. [redacted] From Skirotava to the Ergli railroad 50X1-HUM

the road was of gravel and in very poor condition. From the Riga-Ergli railroad it was asphalt up to a point and from there on was paved with stones. The main road from Riga to Daugavpils was asphalt from Katlakalns to Kuznecovs, but farther into Riga was paved with stones. Motor traffic was not too heavy. The kolkhoz Jauna Straume had tractors and trucks, which used the same roads. Automobiles could be obtained by anybody who had enough money; there was a special shop for automobiles and motorbikes in Riga. A Moskvich car, the same as the German Opel, could be bought for 8000 rubles; the Pobeda for 15,000 rubles. Some young workers bought motorbikes, mostly those working in a factory, earning good wages, and living with their parents, thus saving money on room and board. A Moskva motorbike, 125 ccm, cost 2300 rubles; one of 350 ccm, 3800 rubles; a German BMW motorbike cost 4250 rubles. A used one could be obtained second-hand for 1000 rubles. The fuel could be purchased officially in shops and filling stations in Riga.

The price was three rubles per liter of gasoline, but many of the Katlakalns people bought gasoline black from the soldiers of the nearby airfield and got it for 80 kopeks - 1 ruble per liter. Oil was obtained the same way, and was of better quality than in the shop or filling station. Motorbikes also could be purchased at the Armijas Ekonomiskais Veikals. A bicycle cost 700 to 900 rubles. Some of the workers employed in Riga and living at Katlakalns bought bicycles. A bicycle required a license plate like a car or motorbike. Examination was not necessary, but one had to register his bike with the izpildkomiteja, and pay 10 rubles tax per year, and then he received a numbered plate and a certificate with his name, address, and the number of the bicycle frame. Extension cost three rubles, and each year a new plate had to be obtained.

50X1-HUM

7. There were many houses directly on the shore of the Daugava River. Some people had privately-owned boats, and some even outboard motorboats. All boats had to be registered, but taxes had to be paid only for motorboats. Opposite to Katlakalns was Dole Island in the Daugava River, and there and on both shores were many fishermen. But fishing did not flourish, since fish were scared away by detonations from a dredging operation in the river, which was attempting to make it navigable to tugboats, which could come up the river only as far as Katlakalns, where there was an assembly place for lumber-rafts coming downstream. There was a ship connection between Dole Island and Riga, but the last one Riga-bound was due in the afternoon, and those who wanted to go to Riga afterwards were rowed over to Katlakalns and then took a train or streetcar from the Sarkanais Kvadrats factory. The nearest railway station was Skirotava. When the weather was stormy, the old ferry man did not like to row over to Dole, so local boys earned money rowing people over. The passengers were mostly women gathering skabenes, a certain grass used for food, and selling it on the market in Riga. Each one paid two or three rubles for a trip, and so the boys earned money for the theater or volley-ball, which was a very popular game. The river was deepened to give access to the chalk factories on Dole and also on the right bank of the river. The stones and rocks in the river were blown up with dynamite. The teams carrying out the detonations came from Riga, from a State-run enterprise. These teams worked on the river each summer.
8. There was a militiaman in uniform who stayed permanently in Salaspils and came now and then to Katlakalns for checkups and, in 1948, for several days

SECRET

SECRET

50X1-HUM

-4-

50X1-HUM

during the issuance of new passports. This man from Salaspils had stars on his shoulderboards and therefore, according to source, must have been an officer; [redacted]

The istreibitel was a Communist, though his brother was not and often complained about the life. Nevertheless their relations were good, and when the militia officer came to Katlakalns in 1948 and had to stay for a couple of days, he was billeted in the house belonging to the brother of the istreibitel. The militia officer from Salaspils was a Soviet who knew Latvian. Katlakalns was a rural community and did not belong to Riga. Why the registration of the inhabitants should be done in Riga at the militia office at Skolas iela [redacted] 50X1-HUM

It could be due to the fact that the rayon was Riga Rayon. At any rate the office [redacted] 50X1-HUM
Skolas iela in Riga. [redacted]

Street Names and Buildings

9. Many Riga streets received new names in 1950. Marijas iela was renamed Suvorova iela. Kr. Barona iela, which was Suvorova iela until 1918, and called Kr. Barona iela only after the independence of Latvia, was still under the same name. Gertrudes iela received another name, [redacted] 50X1-HUM

Whether Brivibas bulvaris is called Lenina bulvaris [redacted]
where there formerly was a kiosk, now stands a monument of Lenin. Raina [redacted]
[redacted] and Skolas iela definitely had their old names. [redacted]

Among smaller streets in the outskirts of the town, Zvaigzne iela and Augustines iela had the same names. On the Esplanade behind the Orthodox church a stage was built for the use of choirs during the big music festivals. In the fall of 1950 it was torn down, since it was said that a bigger one would be built. Then he heard that there was no money available and rebuilding was not even started until May 1951. All people laughed at that. In Grand Vermana Garden the stage for the orchestra was torn down and a bigger one built on a stone foundation opposite the old location. There were no other buildings in Vermana Gardens. The lion monuments were still there, and also roses and other flowers everywhere. In Little Vermana Garden there was a restaurant. In Grand Vermana Garden there was a W. C. for public use on the north side. Whether that street is called Terbatas iela, [redacted] 50X1-HUM
Other W. C.'s for public use were in the cellar of the kiosk near the Liberty Monument. A big clock on the pavement was still there. On the opposite corner, toward Bastejkalns, there was a booth for a policeman who operated traffic signals. The lights hung over the middle of the crossing. A similar device was on the crossing where the Lenin Monument stood. There the booth for the policeman was built on top of the corner house, on the side of the street opposite the station. The streetcar did not go along the boulevard between the Liberty Monument and Lenin Monument, but traffic was heavy with trolleybuses, buses, cars, horse-cabs, horse transports, movers with two-wheel hand carts, bicycles, and motorbikes. In the old city there was an old church with a rooster on the tower, and another church with a new tower, pointed but not high. [redacted]

There were ruins around the Armijas Ekonomiskais Veikals. [redacted]
[redacted] former shops had been closed; there were still a great number of shops on the Riga streets. One of the Central Market halls was damaged, but was later repaired, and used for exhibition of agricultural machinery. There was no bazaar behind the Central Market, but the Central Market itself was used for black market activities. Opposite Hotel Rome was a big bookshop. A shop for photo cameras, skeletons, microscopes, and other items for school use was across the street opposite the Circus. The house of the former Latvian Society was a military office of some sort. [redacted] 50X1-HUM

10. [redacted] the Veterinary Hospital near Grizinkalns, a fence had been started around a raised area. It was behind a sports field and according to the map should be Grizinkalns, not far from Zvaigzne iela

SECRET

SECRET

50X1-HUM

-5-

50X1-HUM

50X1-HUM

and the Veterinary Hospital. [] the Veterinary Hospital in 1949, the fence was already finished; on the corners there were towers for guards, and soldiers guarded the place, and by night it was illuminated by searchlights. In 1950 and 1951 [] something further had been done within the fence. Rumors were spread that some underground plant had been built. It was still a secret in May 1951. 50X1-HUM

Medical Facilities

11.

[] The Soviet doctors who served polyclinics generally were not good, and people who could afford it visited private doctors who were well-known from former times.

12. In the summer of 1948, a dog was shot in the leg by somebody. The dog was taken to the Veterinary Clinic somewhere in the vicinity of Grizinkalna, not far from Zvaigznu iela-Augustines iela, near Rudolfa iela. 50X1-HUM

[] It was an old army horse left behind by Germans and something was wrong with the legs. [] Whether the kolkhoz received treatment without being charged 50X1-HUM

[] treatment was very expensive. All of the doctors and personnel at the Veterinary Hospital were Latvians in contrast to the polyclinics for human beings, where many of the personnel were Soviets and Jews. 50X1-HUM

Merchant Marine

13.

[] The steamer BIRUTA was a large one and made trips overseas []

[] For navigation overseas only the best of those who graduated from the navigation school were chosen. Prerequisite was perfect knowledge of Russian and English. There were several Latvians on board the BIRUTA. 50X1-HUM

[] The captain and most officers were Soviet, and the language used on the ship was Russian. []

[] Sailors were allowed to visit the towns in foreign ports, but only in groups, and one would be appointed to be responsible that all of the group returned to the ship. The length of stay was not more than half a day. The sailors used to go ashore in civilian clothes, but then they were instructed to go ashore only in uniform. They used the time ashore mostly for shopping, receiving part of their salary in foreign currency. They bought leather items, these being very expensive in the Soviet Union. The salary of a lieutenant was 500 rubles per month, plus some amount in foreign currency. Meals and lodging were free. The BIRUTA did not stop at Lepaya [] 50X1-HUM

SECRET

50X1-HUM

SECRET

-6-

50X1-HUM
50X1-HUM

Transportation

14.

Until 1950 streetcar No. 5 went to Kuznecovs, and from there to Sarkanais Kvadrats, No. 15. One could go through with a ticket for 30 kopeks as far as Sarkanais Kvadrats. In 1950 the streetcar lines were changed, and No. 3 went to Kuznecovs instead. This line went along Marijas iela, but in one direction the line was extended to VEF

not far from Zvaigznu iela-Augustines iela, probably along Pernavas iela. There was another line going as far as Augustines iela, but it turned there whereas No. 3 went to VEF. In the other direction line No. 3 was directed to Kuznecovs instead of going around the Ring. Thus, No. 3 went from VEF to Kuznecovs and back.

50X1-HUM

No. 8, which went from Kuznecovs to Sarkanais Kvadrats with only one car, because there was no place to turn at Sarkanais Kvadrats.

After this change of lines one could go through with one ticket from the station to Sarkanais Kvadrats and back again for 30 kopeks from Kvadrats, via Kuznecovs, to Riga Station, but if somebody wanted to proceed further than the station, another ticket had to be secured for 30 kopeks. To go from Kvadrats to the theater, in Valdemara iela, one had to alight at Autoosta and take another streetcar to the theater, paying another 30 kopeks. After the change, all streetcars coming from the other side of the Daugava turned from the bridge to the right and went to the Central Market; they approached the market through one viaduct and came back through the other, so that it seems the former Ring used by all streetcars had been abandoned, and the marketplace was a terminus for some streetcar lines. The streetcars from Pardaugava went over the ponton-bridge, not over the railroad bridges, and there were no streetcar rails from the ponton-bridge in the direction of the castle and harbor. On Valdemara iela, though, there must have been rails, since the ponton-bridge was taken out of service during the spring period of floating ice. Then the streetcars used the bridge at Valdemara iela, which had only one pair of rails. A streetcar went along Raina bulvaris

50X1-HUM

50X1-HUM

No streetcar was in operation on Brivibas bulvaris, renamed Lenina bulvaris, and none on Brivibas iela. There was a trolleybus instead. The streetcar drivers and conductors wore a gray-blue uniform with a sign on the hat with a wheel and two wings. They were both men and women, and spoke Russian and some Latvian.

50X1-HUM

15. Besides the streetcar, Riga had the following means of transportation: The trolleybus had replaced some streetcar lines, such as No. 1, 2, 11, and 12, at least along Brivibas bulvaris. It is not known whether streetcars were still running farther on along Brivibas iela. A new trolleybus line ran along Gertrudes iela, a street now having the name of a Soviet man. New lines had been established. One line ran to the army barracks where the Air Force School was located, turned there, and went back.

50X1-HUM

the itinerary was written on a placard in the window on both sides of the trolleybus, in both Latvian and Russian, just as in streetcars. Fare depended on the distance to be travelled. The uniform of the trolleybus drivers and conductors was the same as streetcar personnel. Conductors were both male and female, language Latvian and Russian, but some conductors did not understand Latvian. A bus ran to the far outskirts of the town but also covered portions of the city. The personnel of the buses in Riga had the same uniform as streetcar and trolleybus personnel. In the main bus station, the Autoosta, there were several ticket offices where a ticket could be bought before entering the bus. The ticket booths had inscriptions in both Latvian and Russian. Taxi-cabs have no other designation than "Taxi" on the front. Women drove sometimes. There were many cabs. They stood in a line at the station, and elsewhere.

50X1-HUM

16. From Skirotava to Riga there were four workers' trains at noon, in the evening, and at night. Besides these, there were trains from Riga to Krustpils and Riga to Skriversi which stopped at Skirotava. The rapid Riga-Daugavpils train did

SECRET

SECRET

-7-

50X1-HUM

not stop at Skirotava. Some carriages carried a plate on the side with the destination of the train. In the stations there was a plate on an iron pole which announced the number of the train and its destination and time of departure. There were also timetables in the form of books, big sheets of paper hung in the station; and, in big stations like Riga, there were big timetables on the wall with arrivals and departures. On the paper placards and on the walls the timetables were in both Latvian and Russian. There was also an information booth in Riga, in the hall of Riga Jūrmala station, but the officials there were very impolite. One could get information at the ticket booth, and in small stations it was the only way to get information. One could ask in Latvian or Russian. The ticket booths in Riga were in the hall of Riga Jūrmala station; so, if somebody wanted to go to Skirotava, Cēsis, Ergli, or Rujiena, he had to buy his ticket in the station hall of Riga Jūrmala station. The railroad to Jūrmala was electrified in 1949;

In the summer there were many trains to Riga Jūrmala. The diesel streamliners to Vilnius went via Yelgava. The upholstered streamliners to Vilnius and Tallinn could be used by anybody who was able to pay the fare, which was much higher than the usual fare. These trains carried sleepers and dining-cars. The passenger cars on express trains were much longer than the carriages used for local trains; also they were mostly new coaches, and seldom did one see an old one with an open platform at both ends. Usually the cars were closed at the ends by doors. The railroad personnel had blue uniforms.

50X1-HUM

Entertainment

17. Locally in Katlakalna the youngsters were fond of volleyball and came together to play it after the working day in the evenings, playing as long as one could see the ball. In Riga the movie theater, drama theater, Arts' Theater, Youth Theater, and Circus

50X1-HUM

In the motion picture theaters mostly Soviet pictures were shown, in Russian, with Latvian subtitles. Sometimes German or Italian pictures were shown, and then the theaters were overcrowded. Usually the foreign pictures were not synchronized and carried subtitles in both Latvian and Russian below the screen. there were two or three pictures in Latvian, one of them about the life of the poet Rainis. Before the main picture a newsreel was shown, the title being something beginning with "The newest...", and now and then a short picture in addition to the main feature. In the drama theater Mernieku Laiki, and another Latvian play in the Arts' Theater. Admission was 3 to 12 rubles. At the Youth Theater there was often a fairy-tale. At Zalomska Circus, near the station, there were three performances on Sunday, at 1300, 1700, and 2000 hours, but on working days only one, at 2000 hours. The Circus was always overcrowded despite the high prices - 4 to 22 rubles.

50X1-HUM

During the summertime the Circus was closed for one or two months. As to the performance itself tightrope walking, lions, and clowns. Clowns joked in Russian, and attempted to raise anti-American feeling by depicting somebody with a locked mouth, joking about the dollar sign, etc. Acts were announced in both Latvian and Russian.

Partisans

18. The kolkhozniki worked in a wood about 30 km. South of Riga. They were billeted in a farmhouse. One evening, after dark, two or three men entered the house and asked for food. They had cloaks with hoods, and under the cloaks they had small machine guns and pistols. To their belts were attached several oval hand grenades. The men were middle-aged,

50X1-HUM

it was possible to cross the Daugava on the ice then. They were Latvian partisans, because bandits were mostly Soviets and came only to rob people. These men spoke Latvian and, when they noticed that there were many people in the room sleeping, they tried to start political conversations, asking how the workers liked the life, whether they expect changes, etc. The workers gave evasive answers, being afraid to be mixed up with partisans. anybody would have reported this visit to the Communist authorities. The partisans left the house as soon as they had eaten something.

50X1-HUM

SECRET